



OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY)

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DoD-State Liaison Office

February 27, 2012

Senator Carlo Leone
Representative John F. Hennessy
Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Room 509A, Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Mr. Chairman,

My name is Colonel (Ret) Harold Cooney. I am the Northeast Region Liaison for the Department of Defense State Liaison Office in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. Our mission is to be a resource to state policymakers addressing the issues that affect the quality of life of our military and their families.

I am writing in support of four bills being heard before your Committee on February 28, 2012. I had the pleasure of appearing before your Committee two years ago regarding issues affecting our Service members and their families. Since that time we have added two new issues to our Top Ten list of issues – Veteran Treatment Courts and Service member transition.

Rand Corporation reported as of 2008, 31% of the 1.8 million who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have a service-related mental health condition or traumatic brain injury (TBI). A 2002 U.S. Department of Justice report indicated that veterans comprise 9.3% of all persons incarcerated: 70% were in jail for non-violent offenses; 82% of veterans in jail were eligible for Veterans Affairs (VA) services (65% honorably discharged and 17% general discharge with honorable conditions); and 18% of jailed veterans were homeless.

The Veteran Treatment Court (VTC) program, or as SB114 purposes, a pretrial diversionary program, is an innovative and effective means for veterans afflicted with mental health and/or substance addiction, to obtain treatment and services to resolve outstanding criminal offenses and stabilize their lives. VTCs show great promise to help afflicted Service members transition back to their communities and families in a healthful and productive manner.

As of October, 2011, over 850,000 veterans were unemployed and the jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans was 12.1 percent. And as we end the war in Iraq and wind down the war in Afghanistan, over one million Service members are projected to leave the military between 2011 and 2016. Accordingly, there is more work to do to ensure these men and women can find jobs at home when they return. We advocate a three pronged approach to this issue:

Improving the Lives of Military Members and their Families

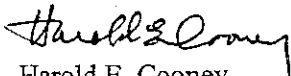
- The Military Services provide Service members opportunities to obtain certifications while on active duty to prepare themselves when they transition to civilian occupations and help them assess how their training and experience matches to the requirements for those credentials.
- Through statute and regulation, states can establish requirements for licensure boards and state academic institutions to accept military education, training and experience to fulfill requirements that are substantially the same. The American Council on Education (ACE) has established college credit recommendations for the learning experiences, which are published in the *ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*. Institutions can consider ACE comparability and applicability of the credit in relation to the student's selected program of study.
- States can also allow separating Service members to transfer a current license in good standing from another state through endorsement or temporary licensing; or to practice in the state of origin for a temporary period with a license extended while on active duty though meeting certain conditions.

HB5297 and **SB251** offer innovative approaches to ensuring applicable military education, training and experience is recognized to assist our Service members in qualifying for licenses or credentials.

Lastly, **HB5171** addresses the need to recognize the Record of Emergency Data (Department of Defense Form 93) in cases where a Service member dies in an active duty status. All too often confusion over the appropriate statutory requirements has resulted in multiple civil actions between family members over the ultimate disposition of the Service member's remains. The proposed action is designed to clearly define the Person Designated to Direct Disposition of remains to limit civil litigation and provide clarity during the stressful time of bereavement.

Thank you for your service to our nation and to the citizens of Connecticut and for your continued support of our military and their families. Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 571-309-7598, or by email: harold.cooney@osd.mil

Sincerely,



Harold E. Cooney
State Liaison - Northeast Region (CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
Defense State Liaison Office
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